

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6158

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, SHUM, IS, XA
SUBJECT: ISRAELI ATTENDANCE AT LAGOS CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 196211

1. I RAISED SUBJECT OF ISRAELI ATTENDANCE AT LAGOS
CONFERENCE THIS MORNING WITH EVRON.

2. NOTING THAT I HAD A SPECIAL UNHAPPY FAMILIARITY WITH TOPIC
BECAUSE OF MY PREVIOUS INCARNATION IN IO, I TOLD EVRON
THAT IN MY JUDGMENT ISRAEL WAS MAKING A BAD ERROR IN
ABSENTING ITSELF FROM LAGOS. I THEN MADE STRONG PITCH
ALONG LINES ARGUMENTATION CONTAINED IN REFTEL.

3. EVRON REPLIED THAT HE MUST BE FRANK IN ADMITTING
ISRAEL'S INITIAL DECISION TO ATTEND CONFERENCE WAS
INFLUENCED BY OUR VIEWS. HE HAD STRONGLY SUPPORTED
THIS POSITION IN RECOMMENDING PARTICIPATION TO
BEGIN AND DAYAN. BUT NOW THAT THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS HAD
BEEN DENIED PARTICIPATION IT BECAME IMPOSSIBLE FOR
ISRAEL TO BE PRESENT. FIRST, AS JEWS ISRAELIS COULD
NOT BE THERE IF WJC NOT PERMITTED TO BE IN ATTENDANCE,
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ESPECIALLY WHEN REPRESENTED BY SUCH MODERATES! AS
NAHUM GOLDMAN.

4. SECONDLY, THERE WAS AN ACCUMULATION OF EVIDENCE
IN THE LAST FEW DAYS THAT LAGOS WILL BECOME A FORUM
IN WHICH ISRAEL WILL BE PUT IN THE DOCK. HE SAID THE
DECISION HAD NOW BEEN MADE THAT ISRAEL WOULD NO LONGER GO

TO CONFERENCES WHERE IT WAS GOING TO BE TREATED "LIKE A PIECE OF DIRT." ISRAEL HENCEFORTH WOULD CHOOSE ITS OWN GROUND TO DEFEND ITSELF IN CONDITIONS WHERE IT HAD A MINIMUM CHANCE OF GETTING A FAIR HEARING - SUCH AS THE UN.

5. I ASKED IF THE WJC WERE TO BE INVITED WOULD ISRAEL RE-EXAMINE IT POSITION ON ATTENDANCE. EVRON SAID HE COULD PROMISE THE MATTER WOULD BE RE-CONSIDERED, BUT H7-:97)\$,95 0ROMISE THE OUTCOME.

6. I AGAIN RE-STATED THE ARGUMENTS FOR ISRAEL'S PRESENCE, UNDERSCORING THAT BECAUSE OF ISRAEL'S FORTHRIGHT POSITION ON APARTHEID THIS COULD MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE AFRICANS PRESENT. IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY NOT TO BE PASSED UP. I SAID WE WOULD DO ALL WE COULD TO HELP, BUT THAT IF ISRAEL WERE ABSENT OUR EFFECTIVENESS WOULD BE SEVERELY CIRCUMSCRIBED.

7. COMMENT: EVRON'S EMOTIONAL RESPONSE (NOT TYPICAL OF HIM AT ALL) TO MY PITCH LEADS ME TO CONCLUDE ISRAELIS ARE WELL DUG IN TO THEIR POSITION AGAINST ATTENDANCE. NONETHELESS IF IN DEPARTMENT'S JUDGMENT THERE IS ANY UTILITY IN TRYING TO FORCE ISSUE OF WJC PARTICIPATION WITH APARTHE COMMITTEE AND SECRETARIAT, I THINK WE HAVE A FIGHTING CHANCE
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OF REVERSING ISRAELI DECISION. IN THE ABSENCE OF WJC PRESENCE IN LAGOS, I THINK THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY ISRAELIS WILL CHANGE THEIR MIND.
LEWIS

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